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As-salamu alaykum, I am Thashkeel, a 2016 Fulbright Alumni from Maldives. I completed my Masters in HR and Industrial Relations from the University of Minnesota, with the esteemed Carlson Scholar award. Upon graduating, propelled by my passion for teaching I joined Villa College in 2018. Today, I am a winner of the coveted Villa College Excellence in Teaching Award (2020). I derive contentment and joy when I engage in teaching. I too believe I have a sense of responsibility when it comes to inspiring students and developing future HR professionals.

Being a Fulbrighter has opened up opportunities and created possibilities both personally and professionally. Learning was beyond the four walls of a classroom and from text books – imagine sitting in a class where the author of the text book is actually your Professor! Thus, I feel immensely blessed to have had the opportunity to study in a world-renowned institution. While studies were an integral part of the journey, the aspect of my time in the US which I cherish the most are the friendships I have developed. I often reminisce with bliss the memories of the road trips, celebrations of holidays such as Thanksgiving, Black Friday shopping, and even the tears.

The Fulbright Program is a great support for scholars like myself, helping navigate a world drastically different from ours. The Gateway Orientation and the Fulbright Enrichment Seminar were great learning experiences. My orientation hosted by the University of Illinois paved the way to learn about US Culture and how to live and learn in a multi-cultural community. Enrichment seminars are excellent opportunities to professionally develop and network with scholars. The enrichment seminar I attended was technology themed, and hosted in Houston, Texas. We were even given an opportunity to tour the NASA Johnson Space Center!

Consequently, with all the learning and experiences I have had, be it positive or challenging, they have definitely shaped me to be better. As a lecturer, I am able to transfer what I have learnt, and inspire curious minds. As an academician, I have an inquisitiveness to learn, to discover and share my knowledge. As an individual, I have become zealous, resilient and enlightened to the world around me. Therefore, my Fulbright experience did not stop when I returned home, it had only begun! That experience continues to create positive impacts in my life and profession and for my country. It is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity!